

**UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA
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SUMMARY OF PHD THESIS

**ARISTIDE BRUANT ET GEORGES BRASSENS.
DEUX CHANTEURS DE LA SOCIÉTÉ CONTEMPORAINE**
(‘Aristide Bruant and Georges Brassens. Two singers of the contemporary society’)

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KEYWORDS: French culture, Aristide Bruant, Georges Brassens, French song

We looked in our view a very difficult subject, but at the same time a great interest in the literary world (social criticism, in particular). These are the relationship between poetry and the French song "to text", but still important verses (words, in the case of the song) that facilitate access to some public genuine poetic values, access otherwise would have been limited.

The problem of choice of both songwriters and performers and titles (the body) extracted from their work was quite difficult because it comes from two of the best known names (and sometimes quite controversial) of French song, whose work continues to inspire, many years after their disappearance, numerous comments which makes difficult any approach.

Our thesis is structured in **two parts**:

- **the first** identifies with the argument itself,
- **the latter** is an appendage, a practical example and explanation of the choice of these two authors in the form of a small poetry anthology containing mirrored the original texts and their translation into Romanian.

In a progressive and logical our thesis begins with an **introductory section** which contains the theoretical motivation of our choice, the objectives, the corpus on which we will stop, but also a short approach to the song's point of view social criticism, with particular emphasis on two aspects: the song as a cultural phenomenon and the song as a process of communication. The **Introduction** concludes with remarks on the status and role of the singer and a series of conclusions which are at the same time as many relevant arguments against the view that the song would be a minor genre of art.

The section entitled **The French song** gives a comprehensive history of this non-genuine cultural phenomenon, from the second half of the eighteenth century (a century before the birth of Aristide Bruant, the first of the two authors

analyzed), even in the 80's twentieth century (Georges Brassens, the second author who is the subject of the thesis, died in 1981). Each benchmark on which we stopped is illustrated with generous excerpts drawn from the texts of songs considered representative for the time in question, our intention is to summarize the characteristics of each period envisaged in the diachronic evolution of the phenomenon.

This chapter ends by identifying the defining features of French song, which has faithfully accompanied the history of France, but also by another set of conclusions (which will also accompany each chapter of this thesis), highlighting the syncretic nature of the song, this alliance between text and music which has the great merit of allowing a wider audience in touch with poetry.

The next two chapters are dedicated to writers selected by constituting almost two monographs structured almost identically: biographical information, socio-artistic themes, posterity, and finally, conclusions and specific elements.

In **the chapter on Aristide Bruant**, songwriter almost unknown to Romanians (perhaps with the exception of those passionate about the art of Toulouse-Lautrec, the author of a series of posters that capture the character of the famous Belle Époque), short biographical needed are applied followed by an analysis of key themes in the work of Bruant. Thus, the sub-chapter dedicated to death, sad and inevitable event in human life, emphasizes the tragic nature of it especially in the case of "off-the-law" (characters who populate it, moreover, Bunting of all creation), forced to live on the margins of society, or in one of the prostitutes (another social category also very present in his lyrics), who lead a hard life without hope.

Other topics of Aristide Bruant on which we hold off (the prostitute, the pimp and the city of Paris) are treated in the same manner applied, with many interesting extracts from the work of Sparrow by which we supported each comment done.

In the chapter devoted to **Georges Brassens**, built on the same model as the one dedicated to Sparrow, we emphasized the themes of "head" of the poet Sète: death, friendship, women and institutions. We have made good arguments in favor of the conclusion that Brassens manifest an obsession with death, more or less obvious presence in many of his poems, songs. We also made a parallel interestingly, in our opinion, between the text of the Brassens song's *Testament* and poetry *Gorunul* ('The oak') of the Romanian poet Lucian Blaga, who is also the subject of death.

Friendship is another topic on which we have long established, given its importance in creating Brassens, poet-singer with the *Les Copains d'abord* or *Chanson pour l'Auvergnat* represent a real hymn to friendship. And that is because Brassens is friend by conviction, conviction due to his nature but also to his intellectual development.

Then we also made arguments against conveyed an opinion at some point by some authors that Brassens was a misogynist. The fact that women are present in his work in so many forms (bourgeois girls there, girls for fun, young, old), as Brassens speaks of them by calling them with great tenderness Margot, Marinette, Fanchon, Lizon Jeannette etc... but because he states that "a woman is a gift," we determined to conclude that Brassens is far from being misogynistic. And this despite the fact that he has never been married...

The final theme brassénien treated by an assertion of it: "I think I never attack men, always the institutions." And it's true, because in all his work Brassens manifest disregard especially devastating to the uniform (cop, judge, or an abbot). In conclusion of this subchapter we repeated the assertion of one of its commentators, Agnes Tytgat, that "In Brassens, the only law is that of brotherhood, and the only power, that of the heart".

In a subchapter further as we stopped on "**the poets of Brassens**", that is to say the poets whose verse (poems entire, or only a few verses, sometimes it has changed) have been set to music by the poet Sète. They include big names of

French poetry (Hugo, Villon, Musset, Lamartine, Verlaine), but also other less known: Antoine Pol and Henri Colpi.

As in the case of Aristide Bruant, the chapter dedicated to Georges Brassens ends with a rich sub-chapter on the **contemporary reception** of his work, the echoes that his creation had not only in France but also abroad.

The conclusion of this chapter is that Brassens can be considered an artist and singer hired if the mental representations that underlie his songs text are considered as a factor in reconciliation and cohesion of groups more or less numerous and at shows.

The fundamental elements of the current French music – especially those of the authors that we're busy (Aristide Bruant and Georges Brassens) – are well documented in chapters **Introduction** and **French song**, and then restricted to the two authors mentioned in both chapters dedicated to them.

The party ended the argument itself is constituted by the **Bibliography**, which is, in our view, sufficiently rigorous.

In **the second part** of our thesis, we added a small anthology of translations, drawn from among the most important texts of both authors. For this, we tried to reveal, through translations very faithful to the original, undoubted literary qualities of these texts, and, implicitly, their authors. It should be mentioned that the French texts are mirrored with the translation, just to highlight the one hand, the qualities of selected texts, and secondly, the translation difficulties that we faced in our approach. Moreover, these are probably the first pieces of Aristide Bruant translated into Romanian, for in regards Georges Brassens, some of his lyrics were brilliantly translated into Romanian by Romulus Vulpescu.